

## Interviewing Techniques

### STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

#### **BEFORE AN INTERVIEW**

- **Research:** Learn as much as you can about the position and the company beforehand - know the company's products and services. Sources for this research are your Career Services Center, the Library and the Internet.
- **Practice:** Practice interviews with a career counselor, friend, family member or by yourself in front of a mirror.
- **Be prompt and prepared:** Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early bring extra copies of your resume, your list of references, a pen and paper, and the list of questions you have for the interviewer.
- **Be prepared to discuss both your strengths and your weaknesses:** Make a list of your skills and key assets. Then reflect on past jobs/experiences and pick out one or two instances when you used those skills successfully. When exploring your weaknesses, be able to discuss the ways in which you addressed these weaknesses to make them a strength.

#### **DURING AN INTERVIEW**

- Introduce yourself in a courteous manner
- Have a firm handshake
- Act professionally: Dress appropriately! First impressions count!
- Keep your answers brief and concise
- Ask questions
- Maintain a conversational flow
- Smile, nod, give nonverbal feedback to the interviewer
- Be enthusiastic: have a positive attitude
- Ask about the next step in the process
- Thank the interviewer

#### **AFTER AN INTERVIEW**

- Ask the interviewer for a business card and promptly send a thank you note.
- Keep the thank you note brief, but reiterate your interest in the position
- Review the interview process and your performance
- Evaluate your interview

## HOW TO DRESS FOR INTERVIEW SUCCESS

### Men and Women

- Conservative two-piece business suit/Conservative long-sleeved shirt/blouse
- Make sure your shoes are clean and polished
- Comb your hair: conservative style and out of your face
- Trim your fingernails and make certain that they are clean
- Use minimal cologne or perfume
- Carry a notepad or portfolio case

### Men

- Wear a silk tie, in an understated pattern: the colors should complement the suit
- Dark shoes
- Facial hair should be well groomed
- Do not wear jewelry other than a wedding ring or college ring

### Women

- Always wear a suit with a jacket
- Wear low heels/pumps
- Conservative hosiery at or near skin color
- Don't carry a purse into the interview
- If you wear nail polish, choose a clear or conservative color
- Wear minimal makeup

## POTENTIAL QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

**An Employer's questions are designed to see whether or not you can do the job and whether or not you will fit in with the office environment. Be prepared that several questions may be reworded inquires of a previous question.**

1. Tell me about yourself ..
2. Why do you feel you are qualified for this position?
3. What is it about yourself that makes you believe that you could do a good and effective job in the position we are discussing?
4. How would you describe yourself?
5. What qualifications do you have that will make you successful in the field?
6. Why did you choose to attend Fulton-Montgomery Community College?

7. What college subjects did you like best/least? Why?
8. Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievements?
9. How much effort did you put into your course-work?
10. If you could do so, would you plan your academic study differently? How?
11. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree? Why?
12. How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
13. What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
14. What are your skills (leadership, organizational, interpersonal)?
15. What is your supervisory and or management style?
16. Have you had previous experience in supervising a staff or other individuals?
17. Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and an employee?
18. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing? How did you choose it?
19. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
20. In your present or last position, what aspects did you like the most/least?
21. How would a previous employer, professor or friend describe you?
22. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
23. What things are most important to you in your job?
24. Why did you decide to seek a position with this firm?
25. What do you know about our organization?
26. How do you determine or evaluate success?
27. What do you think it takes to be successful in an organization like ours?
28. What contribution can you make to our organization?
29. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
30. What is your greatest accomplishment?
31. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
32. What motivates you to put forth your greatest efforts?
33. What have you learned from your mistakes/
34. How do you work under pressure?
35. How do you handle criticism?
36. Talk about a situation where you had to convince someone to see your point of view.
37. Talk about a situation where you had to deal with someone who was being difficult.
38. Tell me about a time where you had a major disagreement with an employer and how you handled the situation.
39. If you and another co-worker are working together and you end up doing a majority of the tasks and getting half of the credit, how would you handle it? What would you do?
40. As you view this position, what are some of the ways you would measure accountability.
41. What are your long-range and short-range goals, personal and professional?
42. What do you see yourself doing five/ten years from now?
43. If you were hiring someone for this position, what qualities would you look for?
44. What do you see as being your first goal if you take this position?
45. What do you feel this position should pay?
46. How would you compare us to our competitors?
47. What question do you have about this company, the position, or anything related?
48. What do you do in your spare time (hobbies, interests\_)?
49. What additional information can you tell me, that we haven't covered so far, that would make you the ideal candidate for this position?

50. Why should we hire you?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN BEING INTERVIEWED

**In addition to the following standard questions, try to generate incisive questions based on your research of the employer.**

1. Why is this position open? Is this a new or replacement position?
2. Why did the person who held this position most recently leave?
3. What do you see as the major responsibilities of this position?
4. What kind of support or supervision does this position receive?
5. What are the opportunities for professional growth?
6. Tell me about my prospective supervisor.
7. What person qualities/characteristics are most important for success in this job?
8. How is an employee evaluated and promoted?
9. Describe a typical day on the job and the overall work environment.
10. What are the most challenging aspects of this position?
11. What qualities are you looking for in new hires?
12. What kind of orientation and training is available for new employees?
13. What are the organizations plans for future growth?
14. What is the starting date for this position?
15. Is there any travel required for this position?
16. What are some of the other office/employees with which I would work?
17. Do you have any information available on the surrounding community?
18. In what ways has this company been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
19. What are your organization's strengths and weaknesses?
20. Why did you join and stay with this organization?
21. Describe you typical client/customer/student.
22. Describe how staff meetings are structured.
23. Do you operate in a centralized or decentralized manner?
24. Do you encourage creativity?
25. What is the time frame for filling this position?

What is Behavioral Interviewing?

Behavioral interviews are based on the premise that your past behavior is the most reliable indicator of your future response in a similar situation. This interview technique is used by employers to evaluate a candidate's potential for success at their particular organization or within a particular position. Interviewers typically craft open-ended questions and statements to elicit detailed responses that may identify desired skills and behaviors. For example, "What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example. Or, "Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?" There is no right answer to a behavioral question. Interviewers posing such questions are not trying to elicit information about your specific skill set; rather they hope to learn about your temperament. Most organizations have a clear sense of their organizational culture and the kinds of people who

will succeed in a given type of job in that environment. They ask behavioral questions to help determine whether or not you are a good fit.

A rating system and selected criteria are developed and then evaluated during the interview. As a candidate, you should be prepared to answer the questions and statements thoroughly.

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR Technique: (Situation, Task, Action, Results, Tips)

#### **Situation or Task**

Recall and describe a challenging situation that you were in or a task you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation and not offer a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail so that the interviewer can understand the specific situation. This recounted experience can be from a previous job, a volunteer experience, or other relevant event.

#### **Action you took**

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did, not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might have done, tell what you did.

#### **Results you achieved**

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

#### **Tips for Behavioral Interviewing**

-Use one event or story per question with specific examples.

-Since, you may not have a large repertoire of experiences from which to draw, it is acceptable to use the same event to illustrate more than one point.

-Structure your story according to SPARE. That is, describe the:

S - Situation P - Problem A - Action R - Result E - Experience (What was learned?)

\*Listen and respond to the question.

\*If you do not understand it, ask them to repeat or clarify the question.

\*Interviewing is stressful for both sides. Try to have a good time. Be yourself.

\*Be proud of your experiences. You are not expected to be perfect. Do not be afraid to relate experiences that did not have an optimal outcome. Use them to show that you have the ability to overcome obstacles, learn from your mistakes, and apply that knowledge the next time around.

#### **Sample Behavioral Interview Questions**

1. How do you typically handle criticism? Give an example.
2. Describe a situation where you feel you were unfairly criticized. What did you do?
3. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
4. Tell me about a project you initiated and carried out.
5. How do you respond to failure?
6. When you are supervising people, how do you motivate them?
7. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
8. Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.
9. Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
10. Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing their share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did the manager take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager's actions?
11. What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?
12. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.
13. Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
14. What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet these standards?
15. Give examples of your experiences at school or in a job that were satisfying. Give examples of your experiences that were dissatisfying.
16. What tricks or techniques have you learned to make school or a job easier, or to make yourself more effective? How did you learn that?
17. How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
18. Describe a time in school when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
19. Tell of the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle-- perhaps an angry or irate customer. Be specific and tell what you did and about the outcome.
20. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle that person?